



## Long-Term Care Regulatory Technical Memorandum

<b>Number:</b> TM 19-02
<b>Title:</b> Fire Alarm Control Panel and Remote Annunciator Location
<b>Provider Types:</b> Assisted Living Facility (ALF)
<b>TAC Reference:</b> 26 TAC <a href="#">§553.62(f)(1)(B)</a> and <a href="#">§553.62(m)(1)(H)</a>
<b>Date Issued:</b> August 8, 2019

### 1.0 Subject and Purpose

This technical memorandum (TM) provides guidance relating to the fire alarm control panel location (FACP) and fire alarm annunciation requirement in Texas Administrative Code, Title 26 (26 TAC) Chapter 553, Licensing Standards for Assisted Living Facilities,<sup>1</sup> in §553.62(f)(1)(B), which specifies the required location of the FACP and §553.62(m)(1)(H), which specifies the minimum requirements and location of the staff or attendant area, including fire alarm annunciation. Hereafter, the TM refers to the staff or attendant area as the “staff area.”

The guidance provided in this TM cannot address every unique condition or configuration. Compliance can only be evaluated based on the particular facts and on-site conditions in each situation. This TM applies only to the provisions addressed by 26 TAC §553.62(f)(1)(B) and §553.62(m)(1)(H) and does not constitute a substantive change to any provision of §553.62. It does not address or modify any other rule in Chapter 553, nor any other legal requirement to which an ALF is subject, including requirements for approval by a local authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) to enforce its own standards.

Graphics included in this TM are for visual illustration only. They are not intended to show an “approved” or “recommended” condition.

## 2.0 Policy Details & Provider Responsibilities

Every ALF must have a fire alarm system with an FACP that is visible to staff when they are at or near a staff area that is attended 24 hours a day, unless the FACP is monitored by a device that is carried by staff. An ALF that has more than one story or more than one building must also have a fire alarm annunciator at the required staff area on each floor and in each building, unless the ALF is a Type A facility that meets the exception described in section 2.3 of this document.

This TM explains the FACP and fire alarm annunciator components of the fire alarm system and provides guidance for all ALFs about the location of the FACP, and for an ALF with more than one floor or building, guidance about the fire alarm annunciator requirement. This TM also provides guidance on required staff areas since there are specific requirements about the location of the FACP and the fire alarm annunciator in relation to the staff area.

### 2.1 What is an FACP?

The FACP monitors and controls **all functions** of the fire alarm system. It receives input from initiation devices like a manual pull station or smoke detector, and controls output for notification devices like a horn or strobe, which notify facility staff and other people in the building that the fire alarm system has detected a fire, smoky condition or system problem. It also allows staff to reset the fire alarm system and control other functions manually as needed.

The FACP displays the status of the fire alarm system using visible and audible indicators. A visible indicator can be a light, text display or other similar method. An audible indicator can be a bell, horn or other similar method. The sound it makes must be distinctive from any other audible indicators in the area that are not part of the fire alarm system.<sup>2</sup>

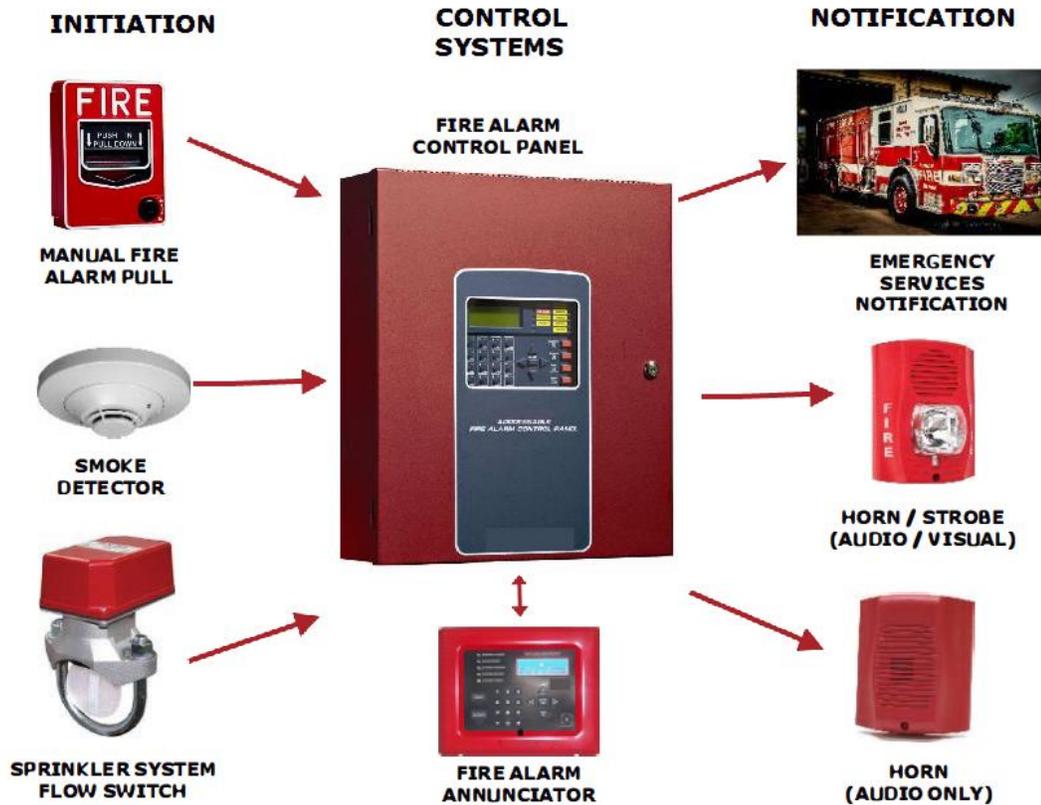


Figure 1 – FACP functions

### 2.1.1 FACP Cabinet

The FACP is commonly called the main fire alarm panel and is contained in a cabinet. The cabinet allows you to see the status of the fire alarm system without having to unlock or open the cabinet door. Depending on the type of cabinet, you might have to unlock or open the cabinet door to access the FACP control functions.

The cabinet is metal or another durable material and is often red in color, although it can be any color. The cabinet often contains the batteries used for emergency back-up in the event of normal power loss.



Figure 2 – FACP in a cabinet, pictured with the cabinet door closed and open.

## 2.2 What is a Fire Alarm Annunciator?

A fire alarm annunciator is the component of the fire alarm system that displays the status of the fire alarm system using visible and audible indicators. A fire alarm annunciator is commonly called a remote annunciator and is located in an area of the building separate from the FACP. The remote annunciator notifies the facility staff and other people in the building that the fire alarm has detected a fire, smoky condition or system problem. The remote annunciator might also include controls that allow facility staff to reset the fire alarm system and control other functions manually as needed.

The remote annunciator might indicate the fire alarm system status for the entire building served by the fire alarm system or only for a specific portion of the building (units served). As an example, the remote annunciator on each floor might only indicate the fire alarm status for that floor and not for the entire building (e.g., smoke detector activation on the second floor would only annunciate on the second floor). The fire alarm system, including the remote annunciator, must meet the annunciation requirements specified by NFPA 72, 1-5.7.3

Even though the remote annunciator performs some of the same functions as the FACP, it is not considered the FACP. The remote annunciator provides fire alarm annunciation as required by 26 TAC

§553.62(m)(1)(H). The fire alarm annunciation and FACP functions are distinct functions, and an ALF must meet the separate rule requirements for each.



Figure 3 – Fire alarm annunciator

### 2.3 Staff Area

A staff area must be provided on each floor and in each separate building. At a minimum, the area must consist of a desk or writing surface, telephone or communication system and fire alarm annunciation.<sup>4</sup> An exception is a Type A ALF, two-story or less, with separate buildings grouped together and connected by covered walks. Such an ALF is not required to have a staff area on each floor or in each building, if the staff area is no more than 200 feet walking distance from the furthest resident living unit.

The staff area is considered “attended 24 hours a day” if it is an area steadily used by staff throughout a 24-hour period, and where at a given time within that period, there will generally be staff present. Uninterrupted physical staff presence within the staff station for the entire 24-hour period is not required for a staff area to be “attended 24 hours a day.”

A person is **at** the staff area if they are standing or sitting at or within any part of the designated staff area. A person is **near** the staff area if they are standing or sitting within **five feet** of the staff area and the staff area is visible to the individual from where the individual is standing or sitting.

An ALF must have a single staff area that is attended 24 hours a day and must determine which staff area that will be.

## 2.4 FACP Location

The FACP must be visible to staff at or near the staff area that is attended 24 hours a day, unless the FACP is monitored by a mobile device carried by staff.<sup>5</sup> The mobile device can be a cell phone or tablet with an application (app), or other device such as something similar to a remote control or key fob designed to monitor the fire alarm system. The provider must determine which staff will carry the device, but at least one staff on each shift must carry the device that monitors the FACP.

Section [2.5](#) of this document provides guidance on the location of the remote annunciator when required by 26 TAC §553.62(m)(1)(H).

The FACP is visible to staff if they **can see it** and recognize that the FACP is signaling an alarm condition while they are standing or sitting at or near the staff area that is attended 24 hours a day. Being able to “see” the FACP **does not** require staff to be able to read the FACP display or determine the fire alarm status.

The FACP is not visible to staff if they **cannot see it** while they are standing or sitting at or near the staff area that is attended 24 hours a day.

An FACP located in another room or area of the facility, or behind a door that can be closed or locked, does not meet the condition that the FACP be “visible to staff at or near” the 24-hour attended staff area.

### 2.4.1 FACP at a Location Other than the Staff Area

In some instances, an AHJ might require an ALF to install the FACP in a location, such as an entryway, vestibule, closet or fire command center, where it is not possible to have a staff area. In these instances, an ALF may install a remote annunciator that is visible to staff at or near the staff area that is attended 24 hours a day.

When a remote annunciator is used to meet the requirements of 26 TAC §553.62(f)(1)(B), it must display the status of the fire alarm system for the entire facility, including all floors and buildings. If the ALF has such a remote annunciator at the 24-hour attended staff area, the ALF is not required to move the FACP to that location or install an additional FACP to meet the requirements of 26 TAC §553.62(f)(1)(B).

If the FACP is located in an area that is not continuously occupied, an ALF must provide an automatic smoke detector at the location of the FACP.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.5 Fire Alarm Annunciator Location in a Multi-Story Building or Multiple Buildings**

An ALF must provide a staff area on each floor and in each separate building of an ALF. Section [2.3](#) of this document provides guidance on the minimum requirements of the required staff area. The staff area must have fire alarm annunciation indicating the units served. Section [2.2](#) of this document provides guidance on fire alarm annunciation and “units served.”

An ALF must have a remote annunciator that provides fire alarm annunciation at the staff area required on each floor and in each separate building. The remote annunciator must be located at or near the staff area and be accessible by staff.

A remote annunciator located in another room or area of the facility, or behind a door that can be closed or locked, does not meet the condition that the staff area must have “fire alarm annunciation.”

## **2.6 Existing FACP or Annunciator Location**

For the purposes of this TM, an **existing** FACP or remote annunciator is one approved for use in an ALF that was licensed, or approved for licensure, before the date of this TM. A **new** FACP or remote annunciator is one approved for use in an ALF that is licensed or approved for licensure on or after the date of this TM.

If an ALF has an existing FACP or remote annunciator that does not meet the requirements of 26 TAC §553.62(f)(1)(B) or

§553.62(m)(1)(H), as described in section [2.4](#), [2.4.1](#) or [2.5](#) of this document, HHSC might permit the FACP or remote annunciator to remain as installed, without modification or with slight modification, based on the guidance in the following paragraphs.

During a life safety code (LSC) licensure inspection, an HHSC LSC surveyor will determine the following:

- the location of each FACP or remote annunciator
- when the FACP or remote annunciator was installed
- the reason it was installed at its current location and not at the staff area
- if it is possible to have a staff station at the FACP or annunciator location
- if the installation location was required by another AHJ
- if the remote annunciator displays the status of the fire alarm system for the entire facility, including all floors and buildings
- if the remote annunciator only displays the status of the fire alarm system for a specific portion of the facility, which portion of the building it includes

The LSC surveyor will document the findings on HHSC Form 3701, Preliminary Findings Based on Survey, Inspection or Investigation, commonly called the "exit conference sheet." The LSC program manager (PM) will consult with the HHSC LSCR Architectural Unit to determine if the noncompliance related to the FACP or remote annunciator location will be permitted to remain without modification, with minor modification or must be corrected.

The LSC PM will notify the manager of the ALF of the decision and will document the details. HHSC will not cite an ALF for noncompliance related to the FACP or remote annunciator if HHSC permits the FACP or remote annunciator location to remain without modification.

HHSC will cite an ALF for noncompliance related to the FACP or remote annunciator if HHSC determines the condition requires minor modification or correction. Once corrected, the LSC PM will document the details of the corrected condition.

### **3.0 Background/History**

Health and Safety Code §247.0263 requires HHSC to provide “guidance on the interpretation of minimum life safety code standards” prescribed under Health and Safety Code, Chapter 247, Assisted Living Facilities, and ALF rules, in 26 TAC Chapter 553. The statute requires a TM to be published at least twice a year.

### **4.0 Resources**

None

### **5.0 Contact Information**

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact the Policy, Rules and Training Section by email at [PolicyRulesTraining@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:PolicyRulesTraining@hhsc.state.tx.us) or call (512) 438-3161.

## Endnote References

---

<sup>1</sup> All references to Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Part 1, Chapter 553, Licensing Standards for Assisted Living Facilities, can be viewed at the [Texas Office of the Secretary of State website](#).

<sup>2</sup> NFPA 72, National Fire Alarm Code, 1999 edition  
National Fire Protection Association, Inc. (NFPA)  
One Batterymarch Park  
Quincy, Massachusetts 02269

NFPA 72, 1-5.4.4 and 1-5.4.7

All references to NFPA 72 requirements can be viewed at no cost at:  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

### **To review codes and standards online:**

- [View the list of NFPA's codes and standards](#).
- Select the document you want to review.
- Select the edition of the document you want to review.
- Click the "Free access" link (under the document title)
- You will be asked to "sign in" or create a profile to access the document in read-only format.

<sup>3</sup> 26 TAC §553.62(f)(1)

<sup>4</sup> 26 TAC §553.62(m)(1)(H)

<sup>5</sup> 26 TAC §553.62(f)(1)(B)

<sup>6</sup> NFPA 72, 1-5.6